The Sun.

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Street Congestion and Tall Buildings.

The contention that the height of buildings should be limited in order to prevent further street congestion is a good example of muddled reasoning. Tall buildings are a frequent result, never in any proper sense the cause, of congested traffic. To limit the supply of housing at a traffic centre means a restriction of the volume of business that can be transacted there in competition with other traffic centres of the same general order. The business housed in middle and lower Manhattan is the source of the prosperity of the 4,250,000 people who make up the population of this town. It is the product, not the origin, of the great systems of land and water transportation that meet at the port of New York. Manhattan would not be the commercial, industrial and financial centre that it is if it were not, figuratively, the portage between the main streams of traffic coming to the harbor from every quarter. The amount of portage that can be handled is determined by the cost, of which rent is the principal element. Now, it would be absurd to argue that the city should prevent further street congestion by compelling landlords to advance rents with a view to diverting traffic to Boston or Philadelphia. Yet higher rents would be the inevitable result of limiting the height of buildings.

The obvious remedy for street congestion is more roadway or quicker circulation of traffic. WILLIAM J. WILGUS in the hearing before the Public Service Commission on his proposed freight subway, claimed that it would be capable of handling 90 per cent. of the commerce of lower Manhattan and that it would greatly reduce the inordinate expense now charged up to trucking. If the statement is correct, a freight subway would be of more substantial benefit just now than would another passenger subway. It would clear the streets of innumerable slow moving teams which now impede the progress of the surface cars, and, as is known, the rate of progress of these cars downtown reacts on the speed of surface transportation throughout the city.

As to providing more roadway, the city is constantly widening narrow streets in the outlying districts. No one apparently thought of limiting the height of buildings at Westchester, out in The Bronx, "in general accordance with the width" of the old village streets there. Yet adequate highways at the commercial centre are of first importance. The city has not in years done anything to enlarge its central thoroughfares, though many of them are mere lanes inherited from the colonial period. There was some activity in bettering the downtown street system, particularly during the third and fourth decades of the last century, when four and five story business buildings were becoming general; but one of the very latest downtown street widenings mentioned in JOHN J. POST'S "Old Streets" (1882) was that of Wall street from Broadway to Nassau, which was authorized in 1854. It is believed that the only downtown street alteration to be added to the short list given in that authoritative work is the recent addition of a few inches to the width of Cedar street between Broadway and Trinity place and the relocation and widening of the corresponding block of Thames street. These changes were offset by the closing of a block of Temple street, and were of no public consequence, being authorized by the city in order to permit a rearrangement of private building sites.

The expense of remodelling the downtown street system would no doubt be great, but it would be no greater in proportion to benefit than it is to make over the village layout of Westchester. As yet only about 10 per cent. of the sites downtown is covered with modern constructions. The larger the percentage grows the greater will be the cost of improving the street system.

A French Dramatist on Divorce.

It has been usual to regard the loosening of the marriage bond as a part of woman's emancipation. Novelists and playwrights pleading for easier divorce have seldom failed to represent it in that light. Woman has been half seriously pictured as the rapt captive of the husband's spear, condemned to forced labor in perpetuity unless this chance of escape is given her. However, the chance of escape is offered to both parties, and if psychologists are right in diagnosing the natural man as an Arab, always more or less disposed to fold up his tent and silently steal away, and the woman as an instinctive home builder, facilities of divorce should be more congenial to the former than to the latter.

The 213th article of the French code decrees that "the wife owes obedience to the husband." Professed friends of woman's liberty, mostly Radicals and Socialists, are moving to have this article struck out. A bill with that object is now before the French Parliament. Somewhat unexpectedly the playwright ALFRED CAPUS, who understands the ins and outs of Parisian society if any man does and whose comedies have reflected with no very apparent shadow of protest a certain blithe laxity among married folk, rises up in defence of "L'Article 213." "To suppress it," he declares, "would be to make another little breach in the integrity of marriage." The clause is practically inoperative because of its vagueness. Defining no limits or conditions of obedience, it says nothing through saying too much, and could never be enforced at law. On the other hand it is useful, he thinks, as "inclining the husband to tolerance through the illusion that he is the master," and it emphasizes the dignity of wedlock by manifesting a national solicitude about its inner workings.

So CAPUS describes JUSTIN GODARD, author of the bill for the deletion of the article, as a "false friend of women and a brutal male egoist." Whatever impairs the marriage bond is in the dramatist's opinion a menace to the prerogatives of the fair. Woman, he continues in a strain familiar to ourselves, has attained in these days of fierce business competition to a queendom undreamed of before. Man goes forth early and labors late, and in the evening she meets him fresh and invincible, and her rôle in the partnership is to enjoy and distribute his earnings. Indeed his position would be abject in the home were it not that the possibility of his running off through divorce bridles and intimidates the wife from asserting her dominion to "the limit." CAPUS, as a sincere friend of women, counsels them to reject these perfidious allies, who under pretence of freeing the wife are emancipating themselves.

We submit this suspicion to our women's clubs in the hope that they will make the most of it.

Reduced Railroad Fares.

The first thought in a commuter's mind on learning that the Interstate Commerce Commission has declared illegal the special rate tickets heretofore sold to school students by railroads is painful and alarming. If it is against the law to make a special rate for a school student, why is it not also illegal to carry business men between their homes and their workshops at less than single fares?

The students' tickets were sold to actual pupils in recognized schools at a very low rate. They entitled the holders to a limited number of rides between points specified, and under certain restrictions. They differed in no essential from the monthly tickets used by thousands of men and women who live in the suburbs and work in New York, which are sold at considerable reduction from the price of single tickets and of regular excursion tickets. Why, too, is not the family or fifty trip ticket, good for all the members of a family and all guests of the family, illegal? Equipped with it a man may travel for two-thirds of what it would cost him if he were obliged to buy a single trip or excursion ticket, and its restrictions as to time of using are generous in comparison with the others.

There has been no public complaint in regard to any of these special rates. No user of a fifty trip ticket has felt himself wronged because for a ticket entitling any member of his family or any friend to travel at any time within a year on its coupons he was obliged to pay more than did the man who bought a ticket on which one named person might ride sixty times in a designated month. The holder of the sixty trip ticket has not growled because his neighbors' daughters or sons could ride to school for about half of what it cost him to make a trip of similar length. Apparently the railroads were not disturbed. Only the Interstate Commerce Commission and the law administered by it recognized the injustice of the students' rate. The question now is how long it will be before the other low rates are declared in violation of the statute. This is a matter of vital importance to some scores of thousands of persons living near New York.

The Greatness of Modern Germany.

In view of the carping spirit in which some British newspapers are in the habit of commenting on German ideas and German achievements it is satisfactory to find an English writer who treats the German people not only with strict justice but with sympathetic appreciation. Mr. W. H. DAWSON, whose book on "The Evolution of Modern Germany" deserves more attention than hitherto it has received on this side of the Atlantic, cautions his countrymen not to underrate the strength and permanency of the big navy movement in Germany. That movement is the outcome of the deliberate will and calm resolution of a united nation. Behind the navy party are arrayed powerful industrial interests. Moreover, the programme of naval expansion has done more than anything else to draw political parties in Germany together. Even the Socialists are by no means hostile to the building up of a strong sea power. The undivided and enthusiastic approval by the German nation of the efforts making for the creation of a great navy are due to the conviction that Germany must either expand seaward or perish. At present she is an imprisoned empire.

What lies at the root of Germany's industrial progress and naval expansion policy? Mr. DAWSON answers that the population difficulty is the key to the characteristic features of modern Germany. The annual increase of population is 800,000 souls, and soon, probably, it will reach 1,000,000. No ingenuity and no exertion can bring the food of these 800,000 people yearly added to the empire's inhabitants out of the German soil. It follows that for Germany all questions of foreign policy must be viewed from the standpoint of the procurement and maintenance of markets abroad, and especially in transoceanic countries. In order to feed her fast growing population it is absolutely necessary for Germany to increase her export products and to find fresh markets for them.

That is why German competition, far from showing signs of flagging, must become more and more severe in the near future. Mr. DAWSON bears witness also to the fact that Germany's industrial progress has been achieved by means and methods that deserve the highest commendation. Science, education, application and a vigilant heed to details are, he says, the principal causes of Germany's success as a rival in the markets of the world. In view of these facts Englishmen are warned by Mr. DAWSON not to take for granted that the German navy will prove inefficient in time of war. Efficiency is assured by the same thoroughness which characterizes German industrial methods. In the creation of their navy Germans are exhibiting, he says, the same scientific spirit, the same nice adaptation of means to ends and the same capacity for taking pains which has made their army what it is.

The idea prevalent in England that the imperial German finances are in a bad way is also declared to be without foundation. The fact is recalled that in Prussia alone the value of State railways, forests, lands and mines is officially estimated at $7,000,000,000, whereas the total debts of all the constituent States and of the empire are only about $4,125,000,000. It is true that this year Germany will be constrained to borrow about $154,000,000 for her navy and for naval works, but this is because the empire's constitution obstructs the imposition of direct imperial taxes, such as an income tax or death duties. Indeed, Mr. DAWSON knows of nothing which should strike British taxpayers more forcibly than the comparative lowness of German imperial taxation.

Mr. DAWSON is not one of those who believes that German warlike passions have been raised to fever heat by a prodigious series of successes. He holds, on the contrary, that there is no more pacific nation in Europe than the German. It is the desire to possess rather than to use those two symbols of force—an army and a navy—which animates the middle and upper classes and makes it so much easier in modern Germany for Ministers of War and the Admiralty to carry out their costly schemes than it was for their predecessors.

The Unemployed Artist.

It seems that while the supply of British pictures is always increasing the demand for them grows less and less. The autumn picture season moves the London *Times* to some serious editorial comment on the situation. It lays the blame chiefly on the painters. "It is pretty clear," it says, "that the art of painting as at present practised is too difficult for many painters, and that their talent would be better employed in some easier and more useful art." The main function of a picture, according to this critic, is to decorate, and the public finds that it can get both cheaper and better decorations than pictures:

> "We have not been in the habit of regarding pictures as decoration at all. The proof is that if we thought of them as ornaments to a wall we should not be able to endure their frames for a moment, and painters would not frame them as they usually do."

If the British public now regards it as the main function of a picture to decorate a wall, we must conclude that RUSKIN has labored in vain and that Sir W. RICHMOND, R. A., was right in urging the Government the other day to start a Ministry of Art and to send apostles of taste through the land. The *Times* treads less dubious ground when it remarks that in the Florence of the Renaissance there was a sort of natural selection among artists, and that the majority contented themselves with crafts of evident utility, while only the best became painters; whereas in modern Britain the principle of selection is social and therefore artificial. It seems quite probable that the British caste system may mislead some inadequate aspirants into the reputedly "genteel" ranks of painters, and possibly we ourselves suffer to some extent from a like snobbishness.

But the *Times* overlooks one condition, which is operative not only in Britain but in most other countries, and for which the unfortunate painters are not to be blamed. The great increase of public galleries and exhibitions may be compared to the extension of the public or circulating library system. As people borrow books nowadays instead of buying them, so the multiplication of the public picture, so to speak, is surely somewhat unfavorable to private ownership.

A Last Proof.

The Hon. CHARLES J. BONAPARTE rounds off his official career most happily. His speech in Pittsburg the other night before the National Municipal League removes the last possible doubt as to his fitness for the position of Attorney-General which he has occupied so deplorably and will no doubt continue to occupy until the present Administration ends. In the course of that address he crowned the evidence of his grotesque unsuitability with a capstone that obliterates the last shred of hesitation.

We have at various times wavered in our estimate of Mr. BONAPARTE, sometimes regarding him as a misplaced jester, again inclined to estimate him as a solemn and benighted fumbler, washed up into lofty places upon a wave of wealth and family and carefully conserved connections. We know now that an inscrutable but presumably wise Providence has reserved him as a final and unanswerable illustration, in the closing hours of this régime of hysteria, of the apotheosis of futility.

Mr. BONAPARTE'S grievance, expressed in the Pittsburg speech, is the difficulty in the way, under existing laws, of rearresting and trying over again on the same charges undesirable persons who have been acquitted by the courts. "Fairly and properly tried," says Mr. BONAPARTE, "these persons should go free as air if once released by a competent tribunal." That is as it should be. But if they have not been fairly and properly tried, if the least uncertainty—in Mr. BONAPARTE'S mind, of course—attends their acquittal, then it is a burning shame, a bitter scandal, an ingrowing sore upon the political body that Mr. BONAPARTE cannot again invoke the machinery of the law and once more subject them to Napoleonic inquisition. There are courts and courts, systems and systems, proceedings and proceedings. Those which he, Mr. BONAPARTE, approves are virtuous and good. The rest of them are anathema. And to this end he cries aloud in Pittsburg. The circumstance that he is not in a position to say which tribunals are righteous and which are accursed inspires his mind with doubts as to the integrity of our institutions and the eventual emancipation of the human race.

Great Scheme.

The Real Estate Board of Brokers, according to a modestly worded prospectus, has authorized and instructed its committee on taxation and legislation to organize and maintain a taxpayers' congress. The aim of the congress is to "present the keynote of good government" and to "correct evils due to corrupt partisan political domination."

The committee has already, it appears, divided every Assembly district of this borough into convenient sections, in each of which branches of the congress are to be formed, comprising all or as many as possible of the local taxpayers. The congress is to act on matters affecting real estate and the interests of taxpayers, and if its demands for consideration are not heeded it may seek new legislation to give its commission "an examinatory and advisory power in regard to budget and taxes."

For "further information" the prospectus invites readers to apply to the president of the Real Estate Board of Brokers. And who is the president of the Real Estate Board of Brokers? Why, none other than our friend the auctioneer, JOSEPH P. DAY, treasurer of Tammany Hall, who occasionally puts up a choice parcel or two for the city.

It would be becoming of Mr. BRYAN as a plutocrat who aims to be true to his responsibilities, and especially to his responsibility to "the producing classes," to produce the $7,000 the lack of which makes the Democratic national committee mourn.

The other day the Hon. NATHAN BAY SCOTT of West Virginia came from an interview with Mr. TAFT "glowing" with enthusiasm. He is one of our best professional glowers, and it is beautiful to find him glowing as rapturously for Mr. TAFT as he has long glowed for Mr. ROOSEVELT. It is impossible to keep him away or to keep away from him. According to THE SUN'S despatch of November 20 from Hot Springs "he really went away to-night, for a time at least." For a time, possibly. He got a bite of something to eat, but undoubtedly he returned. He must be there yet, sleeping on the piazza or in a tent at the door Few things in politics are more touching than the unquenchable love of the Hon. NATHAN BAY SCOTT for a great man with loaves and fishes to distribute.

No figure in the long history of the victims of decline and fall off is so pathetic as the Hon. TOM JOHNSON appearing on the streets of Cleveland without an overcoat—the day was warm—or an automobile. MARIUS sitting on the ruins of Carthage does not so squeeze the lachrymal ducts of mankind.

> It is charged that this man [JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER] has been deceitful in his business methods. Why not? Modern competitive business is war, and all things are fair in war. We do not blame, we praise a General for deceiving his enemy.—*The Rev.* ALGERNON S. CRAPSEY.

Whatever the Rockefeller system may have been, this parallel of the reverend gentleman is as unfair to business men as it is to the General. It would justify the merchant in selling shoddy for pure wool—some do, of course, we know, but others are more discriminating, and others sell their goods for what they are. As for the soldier, he kills and prevails by playing the game according to accepted rules. It is not an accepted rule in business to lie and cheat, although lying and cheating may be common enough.

Justice WEAVER of the Iowa Supreme Court in construing the contract of a teacher of athletics decided the football season to be that part of the year ending with Thanksgiving Day, and added:

> "The remainder of the year of the university student may be devoted to the study of football, but the football season proper ends appropriately with a general thanksgiving."

We infer that this Iowa Judge belongs to the Eliot strict construction school of football and is glad when the season is over.

Bryan's Vote in This Town.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In answer to Mr. Bryan's questions about the falling off in the Democratic vote in New York city I wish to say:

First, it was in part the fault of the candidate, because he avoided the only real issue between the two parties, the reform of the tariff, and tried to make issues of undemocratic fads for the moment popular in parts of Nebraska. Then, again, Mr. Bryan's former views about free silver, expansion and hurling down the flag were never popular with Democrats here.

Second, the platform made at Lincoln and afterward elaborated at Denver by Governor Haskell of Oklahoma and Ollie James of Kentucky was obscure, undemocratic and raised no serious issues.

Third, only so far as it is impossible to vote as a unit a very intelligent constituency against their convictions for one whose views are constantly changing—in other words, for an impracticable candidate on an impossible platform.

Fourth, I answer *Vox, et præterea nihil.* I may add it is untrue that four years ago Tammany helped to make the ticket or helped to write the platform. Finally, the puerility about the up-State Republicans is untrue and unworthy of notice.

J. SERGEANT CRAM.

NEW YORK, November 20.

November.

From the Washington Star.

When the blossoming is banished
And the chilly days draw near,
When the sunny smile has vanished
And the sky has grown severe,
How the pumpkin's golden yellow
Checks the melancholy sigh
As the swain, in accents mellow,
Says, "It's time to pass the pie."

Not alone the rustic, dwelling
There on his ancestral farm,
Feels the influence compelling
Of the season's subtle charm.
See the statesmen of the nation
To our city drawing nigh,
Saying, with a frank elation,
"It is time to pass the pie!"

FRANCIS POICTEVIN.

There is a memorable passage in "A Rebours," the transcription of which may be helpful in understanding the work of that rare literary artist Francis Poictevin. "The poem in prose," wrote Huysmans, "handled by an alchemist of genius, should contain the quintessence, the entire strength of the novel, the long analysis and the superfluous description of which it suppresses * * * the adjective placed in such an ingenious and definite way that it could not be legally dispossessed of its place, that the reader would dream for whole weeks together over its meaning, at once precise and multiple; affirm the present, reconstruct the past, divine the future of the souls revealed by the light of the unique epithet. The novel thus understood, thus condensed into one or two pages, would be a communion of thought between a magical writer and an ideal reader, a spiritual collaboration by consent between ten superior persons scattered through the universe, a delectation offered to the most refined and accessible only to them."

This aristocratic theory of art was long ago propounded by Poe in regard to the short poem. Huysmans transposed the idea to the key of fiction in describing the essential prose of Mallarmé; but some years before the author of "A Rebours" wrote his ideal book on decadence a modest young Frenchman had put into practice the delightfully impracticable theories of the prose poem. This writer was Francis Poictevin (born at Paris in 1854). Many there were, beginning with Edgar Poe and Louis Bertrand, who had essayed the form, at its best extremely difficult, at its worst too tempting to facile conquests: Baudelaire, Huysmans in his "Le Drageoir aux Epices," Daudet, De Banville, Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Maurice de Guérin, and how many others! During the '80s the world of literature seemed to be fabricating poems in prose. Pale youths upon whose brows descended aureoles at twilight sought fame on this ivory miniature carving addressed to the "ten superior persons" very much scattered over the globe. But like most peptonic products the brain, as does the stomach, finally refuses to accept as nourishment these artificial concoctions too heavily flavored with midnight oil. The world, which is gross, prefers its literature by the gross, and although it has been said that all the great exterior novels have been written, the majority of readers continue to read long winded stories dealing with manners and, of course, the eternal conquest of an uninteresting female by a mediocre male. Aiming at instantaneity of pictorial and musical effect—as a picture become lyrical—the poets who fashioned their prose into artistic rhythms and colors and tones ended by exhausting the patience of a public rapidly losing the "faculty of attention."

Possibly these things may account for the neglect of a writer and thinker of such delicacy and originality as Poictevin, but he was always caviar even to the consumers of literary caviar. He had a small audience in Paris, and after his first book appeared—one hesitates to call it a novel—Daudet saluted it with the praise that Sainte-Beuve, the Sainte-Beuve of "Volupté" and "Port-Royal," would have been delighted with "La Robe du Moine." Here is a list of Poictevin's works and the years of their publication until 1894. Please note their significant and extraordinary names: "La Robe du Moine," 1882; "Ludine," 1883; "Songes," 1884; "Petitan," 1885, "Seuls," 1886; "Paysages et Nouveaux Songes," 1888; "Derniers Songes," 1888; "Double," 1889; "Presque," 1891; "Heures," 1892; "Tout Bas," 1893; "Ombres," 1894.

A collective title for them might be "Nuances"; Poictevin searches the last nuance of sensations and ideas. He is a remote pupil of the Goncourts, and far superior to his master in his power of recording the impalpable. Compare any of his books with the "Mme. Gervaisais" of the Goncourts; the latter is mysticism in the concrete. At the same time he recalls Amiel, Maurice de Guérin, Walter Pater and Coventry Patmore. A mystical pantheist in his worship of nature, he is a mystic in his adoration of God. This intensity of vision in the case of Poictevin did not lead to the depravities, exquisite and morose, of Baudelaire, Huysmans and the brilliant but outrageous Barbey d'Aurevilly. With his soul of ermine Poictevin is characterized by De Gourmont as the inventor of the mysticism of style. Once he saluted Edmund de Goncourt as the Velasquez of the French language, and that master, not to be outdone in politeness, told Poictevin that his prose could boast its "victories over the invisible." If by this Goncourt meant making the invisible visible, rendering in prose of crepuscular subtlety moods recondite, then it was not an exaggerated compliment. In such spiritual performances Poictevin resembles Lafcadio Hearn in his airiest gossamer webbed phrases. A true, not a professional symbolist, the French *prosateur* sounds Debussy twilight harmonies. His speech at times glistens with the hues of a dragon fly zigzagging in the sunshine. In the tenuous exaltation of his thought he evokes the ineffable deity, circled by faint glory. To compass his picture he does not hesitate to break the classic mould of French syntax while using all manners of strange fangled vocables to attain effects that remind one of the clear-obscure of Rembrandt. Indeed, a mystic style is this, beside which most writers are heavy handed and obvious.

Original in his form, in the bizarre architecture of his paragraphs, pages, chapters, he abolishes the old endings, cadences, chapter headings. Nor, except at the beginning of his career, did he portray a definite hero or heroine. Even names are avoided. "He" or "she" suffices to indicate the sex. Action there is little. Story he has none to tell; by contrast Henry James is epical. Exteriority does not interest Poictevin, who is nevertheless one of the most charming landscape painters in French literature; intimate and charming. His young man and young woman visit Mentone, the Pyrenees, Brittany, along the Rhine—a favorite resort—Holland, Luchon, Montreux, and Switzerland generally. His palette is marvellously complicated. We should call him an impressionist but that the phrase is become banal. Poictevin deals in subtle grays. He often writes *gris iris*. His portraits swim in a mysterious atmosphere as do Eugène Carrière's. His fluid, undulating prose calls up landscapes in the manner of Theocritus; he observes a Lucretian attitude toward nature.

The tiny repercussions of the spirit that is reacted upon by life are Whistlerian notations in the gamut of this artist's instrument. Evocation, not description; evocation, not narration; always evocation, yet there is a harmonious ensemble; he returns to his theme after capriciously circling about it as does a Hungarian gypsy when improvising upon the heart strings of his auditors. Verlaine once addressed a poem to Poictevin the first line of which runs: "Toujours mécontent de son œuvre." Maurice Barrès evidently had read "Seuls" before he wrote "Le Jardin de Bérénice" (1891). The young woman in Poictevin's tale has the same feverish languors; her male companion, though not the egotist of Barrès, is a very modern person, slightly consumptive; one of whom it may be said, in the words of Poictevin: "Is there anything sadder under the sun than a soul incapable of sadness?" In their room hang portraits of Baudelaire and the Curé d'Ars. Odder still is the monk, P. Martin. Martin is the name of the "adversary" in "The Garden of Berenice." Huysmans, too, must have admired Poictevin's descriptions of the Grünewald Christ at Colmar, and of the portrait of the Young Florentine in the Stadel Museum at Frankfort. It would be instructive to compare the differing opinions of the two critics concerning this last named picture. There are half a dozen well known French writers who have studied the work of Poictevin to good purpose, but without acknowledging the source.

A mirror, Poictevin's soul reflects the moods of landscapes. Without dogmatism he could say with St. Anselm that he would rather go to hell sinless than be in heaven smudged by a single transgression. To his tender temperament even the reading of Pascal brought shadows of doubt. A persistent dreamer, the world for him is but the garment investing God. Flowers, stars, the wind that weeps in little corners, the placid bosom of lonely lakes, far away mountains and their mystic silhouettes, the Rhine and its many curvings, the clamor of cities and the joy of the grass are his themes. Life with its frantic gestures is quite inutile. Let it be avoided. You turn after reading Poictevin to the "Minoration" of Emile Hennequin: "Let all that is be no more. Let glances fade and the vivacity of gestures fall. Let us be humble, soft, and slow. Let us love without passion, and let us exchange weary caresses." Or the tragic cry of Ephraim Mikhael: "Ah! to see behind me no longer, on the lake of Eternity, the implacable wake of Time."

"Poictevin's men and women," once wrote Aline Gorren in a memorable study of French symbolism, "are subordinate to these wider curves of wave and sky; they come and go, emerging from their setting briefly and fading into it again; they have no personality apart from it; and amid the world symbols of the heavens in marshalled movements and the thousand reeded winds, they in their human symbols are allowed to seem, as they are, proportionately small. They are possessed as are clouds, waters, trees, but no more than clouds, waters, trees, of a baffling significance, forever a riddle to itself. They have bowed attitudes; the weight of the mystery they carry on their shoulders."

The humanity that secretly evaporates when the prose poet notes the attrition of two souls is shed upon his landscapes with their sonorous silences. A picture of the life contemplative, of the adventures of timorous gentle souls in search of spiritual adventures, set before us in a style of sublimated preciosity by an orchestra of sensations that has been reduced to the string quartet, the dreams of Francis Poictevin—does he not speak of the human forehead as a dream dome?—are not the least consoling of his century. He is the white robed acolyte among mystics of modern literature.

INDIAN TERRAPIN.

Conspectus of Opinion on the Tail of Fiber Zibethicus.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In a delightful editorial in this morning's SUN, "Muskrats in Two Styles," containing an exposition of the practice of substituting muskrat for terrapin as a food, the gastronomic writer gives this description of the muskrat: "About the size of a half grown cat, with a bushy tail and a face somewhat like that of a coon."

What do you think of that? Imagine this water rodent with the face of a coon drying his bushy tail after a wet night. I won't say any more—but, dear me, a muskrat with a bushy tail! D. S.

NEW YORK, November 20.

A Park Specimen Wanted.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Can you furnish a muskrat with a face like a coon and a bushy tail? It would be a great acquisition at the Bronx Park, as the only specimen in existence. A. OUTRAM SHERMAN.

NEW YORK, November 21.

Like a Possum's.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The tail is clean as is a rat's or an opossum's. Pardon the correction from an old hunter. HASTINGS.

WHITE PLAINS, November 21.

Gibe From the Jerseys.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Pot roasted with a little pork, as the Indians cook it, muskrat is good. I like it; but I have never seen one with a bushy tail. Did you meet the one you describe on your way home from a terrapin dinner?

HAMILTON VREELAND.

JERSEY CITY, November 20.

Tails of Other Days.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In my boyhood days muskrat tails were anything but "bushy." FORMER COUNTRY BOY.

NEW YORK, November 20.

A Nutmeg Seeker of Scientific Truth.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Where do your muskrats grow that have "bushy tails"?

GEORGE E. ALBER.

NEW HAVEN, Conn., November 20.

A Good Muskrat Needs No Bush.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I read with delight the symposium on terrapin. While we in this benighted neck of the woods do not feast on the muskrat, still we are fairly familiar with his features, appendages and general appearance and must here declare that we have never beheld a muskrat with "a bushy tail." I would not for an instant accuse the author of the article of being a "nature faker," but if he were to come into this northern country and observe the muskrat he would find the "bushy tail" conspicuous by its absence, as all the caudal appendages are bare of hair. OXALENE CARR.

ALBANY, November 20.

A Categorical Denial.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In the words of a small neighbor of mine, "Tain't neither."

NEW YORK, November 21. C. T. ELLIOT.

No Luxuriance in Chemung.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Chemung muskrats don't have bushy tails.

ELMIRA, November 20. STAR-GAZETTE.

The Kind a Man Wants.

Yes, Jack, I'm married. No, you never met her.
She's not much like the girls in our old set,
Not up to their smart ways; why, she's old fashioned.
She never even smoked a cigarette!

The girls we've always known are jolly fellows,
With mannish ways and strong athletic grace,
So muscular that when they're dressed in laces
And pouring tea, you feel they're out of place.

My wife does not belong to "club" or "congress,"
She's never tried to be a howling swell,
She never bet a cent on any races,
I never heard her give a college yell.

Her voice is sweet, to read aloud of evenings,
To sing low lullabies or simple ballads.
She loves to cook—not fashionable dishes
Like lobster what-you-call-it or queer salads;

But things a man likes, biscuit, bread and doughnuts,
And soups and meats, to eat and not for show.
She's just a loving wife and good home maker,
And that's the kind a man wants, don't you know.

CAMILLA J. KNIGHT.

MOUNTAINEERS.

The Pioneer Conditions of Life in the Appalachians.

From the Berea Quarterly.

Take the conditions of country life anywhere and intensify them many degrees and you will have mountain life as it passes on to-day in the pine scented atmosphere of the Blue Ridge and the great Smoky Mountains. The mountaineer is a Colonial survival, with all the pride and self-respect which belongs to a landholder; and his lack of worldly superfluities, rather than otherwise, contributes to his noble independence of spirit. But all this must be found out by sympathetic approaches, for our mountain friend is reserved, shy, not to say suspicious, and often appears at a great disadvantage in his first contact with "furriners."

To begin, then, with the pioneer conditions, we have remoteness from markets and a corresponding shift in farm activities, many of the old fashioned household manufactures—soap, sorghum molasses ("long sweetenin'") and the beautiful products of the fireside industries—surviving. Ready money is scarce and to be got mainly from forest products where there are streams to float the logs, and from cattle—a crop that can walk to market.

Such a community in the Appalachian Mountains, as on the old New York or Ohio frontier, naturally rears large families and has a much intensified family life and family feeling. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, are much shut into their own society and the feeling of the clan grows. Many of the artificialities and conventions of life are quite powerless to assert themselves in these isolated valleys.

The fight with nature is still of a primitive order. A tree is an enemy. We find great "deadenings"—fields where the trees have been girdled and left standing in ghastly nakedness so that the little bull tongue plough may scratch the soil between them and the sun shine in to mature the crop. Much skill is shown in ploughing in such fashion as not to leave the soil unduly exposed to the washing of the heavy Southern torrents. The fight with briars and bushes is a hard one and you may see the whole family afield—father, mother, boys and girls—not to be pitied, but rather congratulated on a toil at once so sociable and so healthful.

Out of this intense family feeling grows the feud. In a sparse population the Government fails to inspire either confidence or dread, and when a man is killed by some drunken bully the impulse is strong for the "next of kin" to take justice into his own hands.

The antiquarian finds endless interest in the British survivals, which are readily traced when one begins an intelligent search. Here is the pattern in a "bed kiver" which you have seen, perhaps, in English tapestry, and which must have been transmitted from mother to daughter for two or more centuries. Here is a snatch of song that you will not easily find in a book but which harks back to circumstances of English town life quite remote from the experience of the singer. Professor Shaler of Harvard once found a man in Wise county, Virginia, hunting with an English crossbow. Of course he owned a rifle as well, but powder was hard to get, and he had not lost the tradition of the art by which the famous crossbow had been made among his British forebears. We say British because the Scotch and English strains are everywhere mingled in the mountains. The traveller stopping at a lonely cottage may hear the mother quiet an unruly child by saying "Behave, now, son, or Claverhouse will get you!" It is doubtful whether the woman knows anything of the bogey she thus conjures up to "haud the wretch in order," but she is really referring to Claverhouse, the Scotch rough rider who harried the Covenanters in ancient days!

One of the most important things to learn about life in the mountains is that Appalachian America contains all grades of society. They are clad much alike, and all are sufficiently primitive to the gaze of an outsider, but the distinctions are real and keenly felt. Every county has its aristocracy—its select families that hold themselves quite apart from the common when it comes to marriages and higher social functions. Far below the landowners are the renters. The mountains have their share of idleness and of crime, but the vices of the mountains are largely of the Homeric type, which are really less corrupting than the sins of a more artificial condition.

FARCICAL BANK SUPERVISION.

Executive Officers See to It as a Rule That Directors Do Not Direct.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Much is being said regarding the duties and responsibilities of national bank directors, what they know and do in connection with the actual operation of the institutions with which they are connected. It may be said that as a rule bank directors, other than those who are executive officers, know little or nothing about the conditions prevailing in the management of their respective institutions. It is not intended that they should, as it is the policy of the executive officers that it should be otherwise.

Lay bank directors are for two uses—to comply with the requirement of a lawful number and to help raise capital. As far as it can be prevented their duties cease when these results are secured. The same may be said of the directors of most corporate enterprises, regardless of the character or nature of their business. The corporate wrecks of almost daily occurrence testify to monopoly by executive officers.

National bank directors, other than those holding executive offices, know little more about the actual working of the banks with which they are connected than the general stockholder, and in some cases not as much as an outsider. National banks in numerous cases are simply the personal adjuncts of their executive officers, as recent disclosures in New York city illustrate, and this peculiarity is more prevalent than is understood or desired.

The merits or demerits of this condition are not in question here, but it may be said that both are identified in a greater or less degree with it. Under present laws a majority of national bank directors are held responsible for the performance of duties which they are practically prevented from assuming, however willing they may be to meet the duty. A remedy for the prevailing condition in national bank management is desirable, but with the national Government assuming to run the general business of the country its legitimate duties to the people are likely to be neglected and possibly entirely forgotten. A DIRECTOR.

COOPERSTOWN, N. Y., November 20.

The Corinthian Fate of the Old Custom House.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The old Custom House that is being remodelled by the National City Bank is certainly a very handsome building and a great addition to Wall street as well as to the city of New York, but there is one thing that I cannot understand. Why is it that the architect in putting on the second story has made the columns Corinthian, while the columns on the first story are Ionic? Unless there is some artistic reason for this it would certainly seem as if it would have been better to make the upper story correspond with the lower.

NEW YORK, November 20. QUIDNUNC.

Journalism in Pennsylvania.

From the Treverton Times.

We have taken wood, potatoes, corn, eggs, butter, onions, cabbage, chickens, stone, lumber, labor, sand, calico, sauerkraut, second hand clothing, coon skins and bug juice, scrap iron, shoe pegs, rawhides, chinquepins, tanbark, dogs, sorghum, seed, jarware and wheat straw on subscription, and now a man wants to know if we would send the paper for six months for a large owl. We have no precedent for refusing, and if we can find a man who is out of an owl and wants one we'll do it.

Progress in Philadelphia.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* This sign appears on the elevators in the Philadelphia Bourse:

> Express to Second Floor.

NEW YORK, November 21. J. W. FOSS.

Couldn't Pass.

Lawrence had just cried: "Don't give up the ship."

"I've got to," answered his subordinate. "I failed in the test walk."

Herewith the hero expired.

Not for Him.

Commissioner—Don't you want to be uplifted?

Farmer Hayseed—Not much; my wife blows me up several times a day.

Too Much.

Johnny—What did you lick me for?

Father—For heaven's sake don't be a Bryanite.

Proportion.

In college life it would appear
Eleven kick and thousands cheer.
But life itself is found more drear:
While thousands kick, eleven cheer.